23.

The Very COPY of a

PAPER

Delivered to the

SHERIFFS,

Upon the Scaffold on *Tower-hill*, on *Friday Decemb.* 7. 1683.

By Algernoon Sidney, Esq;

Before his Execution there.

Men, Brethren, and Fathers; Friends, Countrymen, and Strangers;

IT May be expected that I should now say some Great matters unto you, but the Rigour of the Season, and the Infirmities of my Age, encreased by a close Imprisonment of above Five months, doth not permit me.

Moreover, we live in an Age that maketh Truth pass for Treason: I dare not say any thing contrary unto it, and the Ears of those that are about me will probably be found too tender to hear it. My Tryal and Condemnation doth sufficiently evidence this.

West, *Rumsey*, and *Keyling*, who were brought to prove the Plot, said no more of me, than that they knew me not; and some others equally unknown unto me, had used my Name, and that of some others, to give a little Reputation unto their Designs. The Lord *Howard* is too infamous by his Life, and the many Perjuries not to be denyed, or rather sworn by himself, to deserve mention; and being a single Witness would be of no value, though he had been of unblemished Credit, or had not seen and confessed that the Crimes committed by him would be pardoned only for committing more; and even the Pardon promised could not be obtained till the Drudgery of Swearing was over.

This being laid aside, the whole matter is reduced to the Papers said to be found in my Closet by the Kings Officers, without any other Proof of their being written by me, than what is taken from suppositions upon the similitude of an Hand that is easily counterfeited, and which hath been lately declared in the Lady *Car*'s Case to be no Lawful Evidence in Criminal Causes.

But if I had been seen to write them, the matter

ter would not be much altered. They plainly appear to relate unto a large Treatise written long since in answer to *Filmer*'s Book, which by all Intelligent Men is thought to be grounded upon wicked Principles, equally pernicious unto Magistrates and People.

If he might publish unto the World his Opinion, That all Men are born under a necessity derived from the Laws of God and Nature, to submit unto an Absolute Kingly Government, which could be restrained by no Law, or Oath; and that he that hath the Power, whether he came unto it by Creation, Election, Inheritance, Usurpation, or any other way, had the Right; and none must Oppose his Will, but the Persons and Estates of his Subjects must be indispensably subject unto it; I know not why I might not have published my Opinion to the contrary, without the breach of any Law I have yet known.

I might as freely as he, publickly have declared my Thoughts, and the Reasons upon which they were grounded, and I persuaded to believe, That God had left Nations unto the Liberty of setting up such Governments as best pleased themselves.

That Magistrates were set up for the good of Nations, not Nations for the honour or glory of Magistrates.

That the Right and Power of Magistrates in every Country, was that which the Laws of that Country made it to be.

That those Laws were to be observed, and the Oaths taken by them, having the force of a Contract between Magistrate and People, could not be Violated without danger of dissolving the whole Fabrick.

That Usurpation could give no Right, and the most dangerous of all Enemies unto Kings were they, who raising their Power to an Exorbitant Height, allowed unto Usurpers all the Rights belonging unto it.

That such Usurpations being seldom Compassed without the Slaughter of the Reigning Person, or Family, the worst of all Villanies was thereby rewarded with the most Glorious Privileges.

That if such Doctrines were received, they would stir up men to the Destruction of Princes with more Violence than all the Passions that have hitherto raged in the Hearts of the most Unruly.

That none could be Safe, if such a Reward were proposed unto any that could destroy them.

That few would be so gentle as to spare even the Best, if by their destruction a Wild Usurper could become Gods Anointed; and by the most execrable Wickedness invest himself with that Divine Character.

This is the Scope of the whole Treatise; the Writer gives such Reasons as at present did occur unto him, to prove it. This seems to agree with the Doctrines of the most Reverenced Authors of all Times, Nations and Religions. The best and wisest of Kings have ever acknowleged it. The present King of *France* hath declared that Kings have that happy want of Power, that they can do nothing contrary unto the Laws of their Country, and grounds his Quarrel with the King of *Spain*, *Anno.* 1667. upon that Principle. King *James* in his Speech to the Parliament *Anno.* 1603. doth in the highest degree assert it: The Scripture seems to declare it. If nevertheless the Writer was mistaken, he might have been refuted by Law, Reason and Scripture; and no Man for such matters was ever otherwise punished, than by being made to see his Errour; and it hath not (as I think) been ever known that they had been referred to the Judgment of a Jury, composed of Men utterly unable to comprehend them.

But there was little of this in my Case; the extravagance of my Prosecutors goes higher: the above-mentioned Treatise was never finished, nor could be in many years, and most probably would never have been. So much as is of it was Written long since, never reviewed nor shewn unto any Man; and the fiftieth part of it was produced, and not the tenth of that offered to be read. That which was never known unto those who are said to have Conspired with me, was said to be intended to stir up the People in Prosecution of the Designs of those Conspirators.

When nothing of particular Application unto Time, Place, or Person could be found in it, (as hath ever been done by those who endeavour'd to raise Insurrections) all was supplied by *Innuendo's*.

Whatsoever is said of the Expulsion of *Tarquin*; the Insurrection against *Nero*; The Slaughter of *Caligula*, or *Domitian*; The Translation of the Crown of *France* from *Meroveus* his Race unto *Pepin*; and from his Descendants unto *Hugh Capet*, and the like, applied by *Innuendo* unto the King.

They have not considered, that if such Acts of State be not good, there is not a King in the World that has any Title to the Crown he bears; nor can have any, unless he could deduce his Pedigree from the Eldest Son of *Noah*, and shew that the Succession had still continued in the Eldest of the Eldest Line, and been so deduced to him.

Every one may see what advantage this would be to all the Kings of the World; and whether that failing, it were not better for them to acknowledge they had received their Crowns by the Consent of Willing Nations; or to have no better Title unto them than Usurpation and Violence, which by the same ways may be taken from them.

But

But I was long ſince told that I muſt Dye, or the Plot muſt Dye.

Leaſt the means of deſtroying the beſt Proteſtants in *England* ſhould fail, the Bench muſt be filled with ſuch as had been Blemiſhes to the Bar.

None but ſuch as theſe would have Adviſed with the King's Council, of the means of bringing a Man to death; Suffered a Jury to be packed by the King's Solicitors, and the Under-Sheriff; Admit of Jury-men who are not Freeholders; Receive ſuch Evidence as is above mentioned; Refuſe a Copy of an Indictment, or to Suffer the Statute of 46 *Ed.* 3. to be read, that doth expreſly Enact, It ſhould in no Caſe be denied unto any Man upon any occaſion whatſoever; Overrule the moſt important Points of Law without hearing. And whereas the Stat. 25 *Ed.* 3. upon which they ſaid I ſhould be Tried, doth Reſerve unto the Parliament all Conſtructions to be made in Points of Treaſon, They could aſſume unto themſelves not only a Power to make Conſtructions, but ſuch Conſtructions as neither agree with Law, Reaſon, or Common Sence.

By theſe means I am brought to this Place. The Lord forgive theſe Practices, and avert the Evils that threaten the Nation from them. The Lord Sanctifie theſe my Sufferings unto me; and though I fall as a Sacrifice unto Idols, ſuffer not Idolatry to be Eſtabliſhed in this Land. Bleſs thy People, and Save them. Defend thy own Cauſe, and Defend thoſe that Defend it. Stir up ſuch as are Faint; Direct thoſe that are Willing; Confirm thoſe that Waver; Give Wiſdom and Integrity unto All. Order all things ſo as may moſt redound unto thine own Glory. Grant that I may Dye glorifying Thee for all thy Mercies; and that at the laſt Thou haſt permitted me to be Singled out as a Witneſs of thy Truth; and even by the Confeſſion of my Oppoſers, for that OLD CAUSE in which I was from my Youth engaged, and for which Thou haſt Often and Wonderfully declared thy Self.

We do Appoint *Robert Horn*, *John Baker*, and *John Redmayne*, to Print this Paper, and that none other do Preſume to Print the ſame.

Peter Daniel.

Sam. Daſhwood.

LONDON,

Printed for *R. H. J. B.* and *J. R.* and are to be ſold by *Walter Davis* in *Amen Corner*, MDCLXXXIII.